

**Legislative Testimony
Appropriations Committee
Governor's Proposed FY 23 Budget Adjustments
HB 5037 An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023
February 23, 2022**

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Dr. Michael J Safian. I have been practicing dentistry, more specifically oral & maxillofacial surgery in Connecticut for 23 years. I am a past president of the Connecticut Society of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons, and currently serve on the Connecticut State Dental Association's Board of Governors. I am an attending surgeon at Yale-New Haven Hospital, and am a key clinical instructor in our oral & maxillofacial surgery (OMS) and general practice dentistry residency programs.

Relative to this subject, I currently and have since its inception, sat on the Dental Policy Advisory Committee of the Department of Social Services Husky program, and serve as a consultant to Benecare for evaluation of cases submitted for insurance pre-approval. I have been intimately involved with the Husky dental program since inception in its current format.

I am writing in regards to the Governor's Proposed FY 23 Budget Adjustments for the Department of Social Services and the proposed increase to adult dental Medicaid reimbursement rates.

It's easy to tell you how inadequate access to dental care can affect a person's health and life, but seeing it first-hand can be quite depressing. As an "on-call" surgeon at our hospital, it is a fact to tell you that a great majority of the patients we see in the emergency room and subsequently in the operating room for life-threatening infections due to dental neglect are adults whose insurance is through the Medicaid program. These people have no easy access to care, and therefore it is easier to go without that care until it becomes so profound that their tooth or teeth become abscessed, those abscesses spread through the tissues of their face and neck and become a risk for their airway to close due to the swelling. We must bring these patients into the operating room, extract affected and infected teeth, and make multiple incisions in their mouth and through the skin of their face and place rubber tubes into those incisions to drain infection (pus), and preserve their lives. Imagine the difference in cost to the system for a simple filling versus all of the costs associated with a multiple day hospital admission, operating room procedures, intravenous antibiotics and loss of productivity for that person due to being in the hospital.

Adult citizens of Connecticut have a very limited source of dental providers. It isn't due to any lack of caring by the dentists of our great State, but simply a matter of economics. As I'm sure the members of an appropriations committee will be acutely aware, it always comes down to economics. In the time since the adult Medicaid reimbursement rates have been set, the costs of running a dental practice have only increased, and supply

chain shortages and associated increased costs have caused these to increase even greater over the last 2 years.

Rent, staff, incoming shipping, dental supplies, laboratory costs, utilities, office supplies, office upkeep and maintenance, staff benefits.... You can name the expense, and I can tell you it has increased. There is no reasonable way that the owner of business can provide a product for less than it costs to purchase and provide. But, that is what the dentists of Connecticut have been asked to do, year after year. I implore you to use your power, power provided to you by the voting citizens of Connecticut, to increase the Medicaid dental reimbursements rate at a minimum to the 25% asked for by Governor Lamont, but to even go one step further and make them equal to those reimbursement rates provided to the children of Connecticut. A person's healthcare needs do not become less important simply because they achieve the age of 18.

I thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this important issue.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J Safian, DDS
2 Trap Falls Road
Suite 103
Shelton, CT. 06484
203-925-8700
toothsurgeon@gmail.com